Rhys Richmond

Wray

Sophomore Honors English

22 March 2015

Nuclear Volition

Click. Click. One more turn of the key, and the door slides open away from me into the darkened loft. This loft belongs to friends of my family, Igor and Anfisa Kluka, evidenced by the heavy fur throws slung across all of the furniture and the slightly-larger-than-standard room dimensions. Igor Kluka is high up in the Party, like all of my father’s friends seem to be. What is a friend’s worth judged by, if not connections?

Beside me, Britta slides into the kitchen and gives me a wide smile as she passes. I follow her, clicking on the lights as I go. It is late April, and the days are lengthening, but the daylight still fades at eight. Enough so that artificial light is needed.

I busy myself with selecting one of many tea options available above the sink. Soon, I shake my head subconsciously. The wealth displayed here alone, in the tea cabinet, is unbelievable. It exists to show what fruits can come from acceptance and promotion in to the Party. I wouldn’t know if not for these experiences with my father and his friends. I will reach this level eventually, if only through working at the plant.

“Here,” Britta speaks softly, as she selects a tea for me. Oolong. Chinese. We have been invited to help ourselves to anything in the loft. Britta’s golden hair sweeps across my arm as she turns and sets the tea kettle to boil on the stove. I watch my wife as she busily works.

“So,” she starts. “What do you make of those rumors?”

“What?” I say. What rumors? I divert my attention to the paper calendar that rests near the stove. It proclaims the date, April 27, in bold black print, decorated by illustrated wildflowers. I reach out and scoot it to the left, fearing the stove’s flame could light it on fire.

“The people that sat next to us at the restaurant.” As she speaks, she hoists herself up on to the counter, watching me. When I don’t respond, she clarifies further, “about Chornobyl.”

“I don’t know. People say a lot of things. People against the party, against nuclear power...sometimes I think these people are against everything.”

“It sounded serious. An explosion.” Britta cocks her head, and her hands subconsciously rest on her stomach.

“Impossible,” I shake my head. “How could an explosion occur at the plant? I was only there a few days ago. The reactors are working well, and there were no issues… I would have heard about it.”

“I see,” Britta nods. “I’m changing,” she calls over her shoulder as she leaves the room, headed for the bedroom.

Alone in the kitchen, I reflect on the couple’s conversation behind us in the restaurant. Something about a reactor meltdown, high levels of radioactive drift, and iodine tablets being handed out in Pripyat. Again, impossible. This reminds me of the articles published by Kovalevskava and Dollezhal a few months ago, questioning the safety of the reactor design. I am comforted by the memory that they were both proved false. There is almost no chance that a safety breach could occur at Chernobyl. My father would have called if he knew of anything.

In the next moment, two things happen at once. The tea kettle sends shrieking steam shooting for the ceiling, and the telephone rings.

“Avgust?” Britta’s clear tones ring through the loft.

“I’ll get it!” I call back, and jog towards the telephone in the corner of the kitchen. This has happened several times since Britta and I arrived. The Klukas are very popular, it seems. I have memorized a scripted answer.

“Hallo? Avgust Gavrilov speaking. The Klukas are currently out of town. May I take a message or direct you to where you may reach Igor?”

“Avgust?” I am surprised when my father’s voice filters out of the phone. “Avgust. There’s been an explosion.”

There is a moment in time where everything feels suspended. I am not in Igor Kluka's kitchen, I am not speaking to my father on the telephone, and my father did not just tell me there was an explosion. Instead, I am weightless: I see nothing, I hear nothing and I think nothing. And then I come crashing back to reality.

"An explosion?" I mindlessly repeat. Nothing has connected in my mind. Why do my father's words have such an impact on me?

"At Chornobyl," my father says, and I hear the truth ring through his words. "A reactor blew its top off at about one thirty yesterday morning. Svitlana swore she heard it. I slept straight through-"

I cut my father off with rapid speech, "You have got to be joking. Why haven't I heard of this? There has been no announcement! No one important is speaking of it! Why hasn't there been an evacuation?"

"We have been evacuated,'" says my father. "We're in Narodichi. The officials have found all of us a place to stay for the night; not great, but it seems safe enough. Your mother is out of her mind..."

Exasperated and addled, I again interrupt my father, "There hasn't been an announcement! If what you say is true, then...then there would be astronomical radiation. We would be affected here in Kiev!"

"Avgust." My father's voice decreases to barely audible. "It is astonishing the higher-ups recognized the danger and evacuated Pripyat as quickly as they did. You know how bad this situation is. Did you not hear of the Three Mile incident and what happened after? We do not want to be painted like the Americans in the media. If there is any way that the disaster can be fixed before the announcement, they will wait.”

This is true. As I mull over my father’s words, my eyes catch a flash of blonde hair across the room. Britta. Has she been listening? Her troubled eyes confirm my suspicions. ‘Chornobyl explosion?’ she mouths. I hold up a finger and turn my back to my wife. Seeing her speak the words is too much. This cannot be real.

“How bad was it?” I say in a clipped tone, not one to betray my thoughts. If the power plant is destroyed, my job is gone. Pripyat will never be inhabited again. My father and I’s livelihoods will crumble.

“Bad,” my father responds shortly. “Svitlana and I took Iodine tablets upon the first rumor, just to be safe. We were one of the few with an emergency supply. But there is nothing to be done for Cesium and Strontium exposure. The compound is tainted, I gather irrevocably so. As is Pripyat…” His words trail off sharply. I hear a faint “Sasha? Is that Avgust you’re talking to? Did you get ahold of him?” in the background. My father responds with a “yes” before returning to the receiver.

“Your mother is distraught. Forewarning,” is all I get before my mother, Svitlana takes over the phone.

“Avgust! Avgust, they forced us to evacuate. I’m sure Sasha told you the worst…They’re all alarmists, every single one of them! I tried to stay, but the police got us all on the second sweep of the town,” my mother dramatically bawls into the telephone, forcing me to listen at a distance. “It’s just what the Americans want-”

Again, the telephone is traded forcefully. “Avgust? I apologize for that. Once she gets something in her mind she won’t let it go… some *gossip*.” He speaks the word with disdain.

My attention is torn away yet again. Britta yanks the phone away from my ear.

“What is going on?” she demands, worry clear in her blue eyes. “Tell me, Avgust! Your father would never call unless-”

I push her away, frowning and resume the talk.

“Father? I’m back, sorry. Are you two alright? Do you need me to come get you? It is only a three hour drive.”

My father immediately lets out a relieved sigh, “Yes, if possible. I hate to pull you away from the May Day festivities, but… I’m assuming there won’t be many of those.”

“Absolutely,” I agree. I worry about my mother, living in a peasant town and fielding farcical rumors from fellow frightened wives. “I will come first thing tomorrow morning. I have the automobile here. It shouldn’t be hard to find you. I assume you’re with the rest of the Pripyat refugees?”   
 “Alright. I believe we’re on the edge of town. Leave Britta at home,” my father advises. “The radiation might be harmful for the child, and you do not want to upset her.”

“Already planning on it. I will see you tomorrow morning. Call me if there is anymore trouble.” With that, I turn and slam the phone back on the base, all civility evaporated. There is no more pretending. This is reality, but I feel like I am in a nightmare. The plant is gone. Pripyat is fully evacuated; a ghost town.

I imagine our flat, right in the heart of town. Only a scarce ten minute walk from our building is the forest, with the multitudinous trees and streams and natural fauna. I could walk to the plant through the forest, I did a few times. The two kilometer distance only took twenty minutes. I always went there, to the woods, when life seemed like too much. When Britta complained, when my mother ranted about foreigners, or just when I became frustrated at anything and everything.

Everything must still be in place in our flat. The clothes I didn’t think to take with me. Britta’s collection of her mother’s furs. Our bed, with it’s silken sheets. The baby’s room. Never to be used. What *will* happen to Britta and my child? Six months until it arrives. I, the father, have no job, we have no place to live, and it will grow up in a world full of radiation. What a perfect childhood experience.

“What is going on?” Britta calls shrilly. I shake my head as I turn, and slap my hands against the wall with force. A few feet away, a picture frame slides from the wall and shatters. A large glass shard hits my foot and I kick it away with verve.

“Avgust!” My wife is standing at my side. “Tell me what is happening.”

“The plant’s gone,” I say sharply, tired already of her questions. Why must she always interfere. This is something I want to deal with alone. “The rumors were true. I’m going to Narodichi tomorrow to retrieve my parents. Alone. I’ll be back within a day, at most.”

“Avgust,” Britta repeats incredulously. “You are going to leave me here alone? What about the holiday? What about your child? The radiation? What is going to happen to our baby? What about the *radiation*?” she cries out with conviction, grasping my upper arm.

“You are fully capable of staying here yourself,” my voice raises with every syllable. I shake her off with disgust. Britta is incredibly selfish. Can she not see that I am the one affected, first and foremost? “Why must all German women be so high strung? Isn’t life difficult when you overreact at every single detail?” I pause and run a hand through my rakish hair before continuing, “I can’t imagine what *your* stress is doing to the baby! How have you made it through life before I came along? For God’s sake, this is my family!”

Britta’s mouth opens and then closes without a word. She turns and lightly steps away. At the door of the bedroom, she spins around and spits out, “Have you forgotten *I’m* your family as well? Or am I not? Good *night*, Avgust.”

With a sigh, I turn and crouch down to pick up the photo that crashed to the ground. Gathering the glass in my palm, I cross the room to the trash and dump the pieces. Somewhere in the process, I cut my palm, and blood dribbles down my forearm. The pain does not register.

Lastly, I pick up the photo that was housed beneath the glass. It shows a smiling Kluka family, together with their only son: Adam. I’ve met him, once or twice. He was an engineer at Chornobyl. I have a brief flash of curiosity. I wonder if he was on shift? Or was he on vacation with his parents? Or his wife? It is no use wondering. Adam’s whereabouts are not my biggest concern. They shouldn’t be a concern of mine at all.

Despite all of the drama, my sleep is continuous. There are no dreams. It has never been difficult for me to sleep. The same can not be said for Britta. I always think she allows herself to lose sleep, worrying about this and that. There is a fine line where empathy and concern reach a nonsensical level.

In the morning, I rise with the sun. It will take three hours to get to Narodichi, four if the traffic is bad. It takes me only ten minutes to get ready - a blue dress shirt, black casual slacks and shoes. I gather the essentials, $1400 Hryvnia, a change of clothes, toiletries and slide them in the pocket of my leather briefcase. I bring a couple pillows, a blanket, in case my mother wants to rest on the drive home.

Britta is not yet awake. I am able to slip through the loft and pour a cup of leftover cold oolong tea without disturbing her. It is time for me to leave.

At the doorway, I turn and look back into the darkened loft.

I will be back soon. I will find a way to fix my life, start anew. I will secure a prosperous future for Britta, my parents, and most importantly, my child.

My hopes for a two or three hour drive are crushed a short fifteen minutes later. The road is stacked up with cars heading both directions: into Kiev and north towards Narodichi and Pripyat. An accident? Mass hysteria after rumors of the nuclear accident? Whatever it is, it is not good. I hardly move for an hour... two...three…

More cars have entered the throughway behind me, so I am completely boxed in. I should have brought a novel. The only reading material I have on hand is one of many nuclear guideline pamphlets from Chornobyl, which I am not thrilled at the idea of cracking open. I am well aware of the sweat beading on my forehead, the temperature is rising outside. It can’t be more than fifteen degrees celsius outside, yet I feel the heat as though it is thirty. I should be in Narodichi by now. What must my father and mother think? Possibly they will have heard of this hold up. Maybe I should walk the fifteen minutes back into Kiev to ring and let them know of the delay.

At last, the cars begin to move in front of me. It is slow going at first, but finally the speed picks up and I am on my way to Narodichi. Echoes of the town clock heralding four o’clock ring through my head as I enter the town limits. I expect some sort of attendant, perhaps a guard, but there is none. It isn’t hard to find where the Pripyat refugees have been dropped. Several buses are parked half-hazardly a few hundred meters away from the town gates. I park next to one of them, lifting off of the clutch.

I do not have to find my parents. My mother runs out from a nearby home, blubbering and bleating my name. It’s a comical sight: my regal mother running out of little more than a small shack wearing an ornate pale gray mink and a black silk slip. She is barefoot, and remnants of black makeup are smeared by her nearly colorless blue eyes.

“Avgust, avgust!” she howls. “You’re here at last. Oh Avgust!”

“Hello mother,” I say stoically. Her emotion embarrasses me.

Behind her comes my father, with balding blond hair and tired blue eyes that reveal the stress the last thirty-six hours has placed on him.

“Traffic delay?” he asks. I can hear a twinge of disappointment in his tone, which makes me want to curl my head in embarrassment. I nod, eyes downcast.

“Well, it is much too late to head back now,” my father states. “Stay the night. We’ll head back early tomorrow morning.” It is an order. I again feel responsible for the traffic.

“Another night in this place?” my mother says rhetorically. “At least it is not more.”

“Come inside, Avgust,” my father orders. “And prepare yourself for her talk. Lots of speculation, little fact. How much do you know?”

“About the explosion?” I respond. My father nods, cueing me to speak, “Little. Only what you told me. I’ve been in the car all day… has there been a public announcement?”

“No, none in two days. Perhaps tomorrow will be the day they realize this is not a problem they can hide. The rumors say that they are attempting to block the radiation with sand dropped from helicopters.”

My father gives a nod to a poorly-dressed woman in the kitchen as we pass. I assume she lives in this house. Soon we pass into a small four-by-four meter room, in which my parents’ suitcases are splayed open.

“The day of the explosion,” I startle when he speaks again, “I saw a couple celebrating their wedding on the riverbanks. Sanguine and blissfully ignorant. Only a few kilometres from the reactors. No one could believe the rumors yesterday… it was far too beautiful outside for people to grasp the possible danger.”

“Do you know how it happened?” The question pains me. I do not want to talk about this, but it is clear my father wants to. I owe him this, at least.

“From what I hear, the night crew was finishing up an experiment and something went wrong with the boron control rods. The nature of the experiment required the emergency cooling system to be turned off. The power was out of control, and there was nothing they could do to control the nuclear fission speed. Hydrogen gas blew the top off, and here we are today.”

“Who was in charge?” I can’t help but ask. This is something I would like to know. “And who in their right mind would turn off the emergency cooling system?”

“I’m not sure. You know as well as I do that the skeleton crew never had anyone intelligent in the lead. Perhaps it was Karkaroff. Or possibly… well, it doesn’t matter now, does it? Whoever it is is likely dying of radiation sickness in a Kiev hospital now, if not already passed.”

My father takes a long breath and continues, “I’ve heard they all have radiation sickness, ranging from bad to worse. A few men died on site… some suppose they are the lucky ones. The rest will have Molybdenum and Plutonium in their bones for life, not to mention thyroid cancer from the iodine in their throats or the Ruthenium in the intestines. Blistered skin, anemia, ulcers, bleeding from every orifice...”

I let the conversation go with that. I am not interested in further discussion, especially about the dangers of nuclear power. All of the people who have argued against nuclear power must be gloating proudly. Finally they have been proven right. Many people are dying, if not already dead. Radiation is everywhere. In fact, I am likely breathing it in right now. This is something I thought I’d never have to face.

It is an uneventful night. My mother forced an iodine tablet upon me the instant I walked in the door. She proclaimed it was an important vitamin, leaning in close to tell me that she did not want to waste the important precaution on the peasants who had taken her and my father in, lest they asked. I took it willingly. After a short dinner of grains and chicken (food not terribly unfit for my family), the hosts led me towards the room I would share with my parents. Britta briefly crossed my mind, but upon inquiring after a telephone, I was told that the nearest one was a half-mile away in town.

Much too far to go for a simple telephone call, especially towards someone who would likely only nag me and complain about being left alone in a nice loft in a safe city. Anyway, Britta would likely hear of the hold up on the throughway.

In the morning, we clear out early. I am more worried about the radiation after sleeping in a town so close to Chornobyl. As much as it pains me to admit it, I know that there will be detrimental effects to exposure. The sooner we leave, the better. The night has also allowed me to soften a little on the subject of Britta.

It must be difficult, as a scared pregnant woman, to go through an event such as this. I feel like I was too harsh, in that moment, to my wife. It comforts me to know that Britta, although high-strung and paranoid, has always been comforting and forgiving.

The road is considerably less crowded on the drive back home, but the trip still takes longer than expected. My mother capitalizes on that extra time, filling it with complaints about her conditions and how anything and everything was being handled. One topic that takes up most of the time is American people, specifically two American people.

“They just up and left! Thought they could find a better life in America, and find suitable men to marry there. I do wonder if they’ve realized their mistake… just look at what has happened there recently with the Koreans! That awful capitalist country!” she laments. “I wonder! I bet that country is tearing Ivana and Katerina to pieces!”

My mother cannot go long without speaking of my sisters. If they can be considered my sisters. They both left to America soon after they were eighteen, one right after the other. My mother considers them traitorous. My father doesn’t have much to say on the subject, but I know he doesn’t enjoy the topic. He only lets my mother rant for thirty minutes before steering her back towards the evacuation and Narodichi.

“Your father tried to get me on the bus, but I firmly said ‘No’,” my mother says proudly. “I wasn’t going to let the alarmists get me, not easily at least. Around six, they came around again and were careful about not letting anyone stay in Pripyat. I *had* to go, but I didn’t *want* to, see?”

My only solace during these conversations was the knowledge that I was going back to a familiar face, my wife. My mother has always made Britta look better in my eyes. Britta does not rant or linger on topics nearly as much as Svitlana Gavrilov does. My mother has also helped me come to reason. Her crazy ranting has made my thoughts swing more positively. My family and I will find a way to get through this situation. I will find a place where we can live, safe from radiation. My child will grow up happy.

I am blithe as I ease off the road towards the first Kiev exit. Home, a temporary one at least, at last. It takes a few moments to navigate the roads, as there appears to be some sort of congregation in the streets. I am too spent to pay much attention to that. All I am interested in is a nice lunch at the cafe below the Kluka’s loft and a nap, all far away from my prattling mother. Perhaps the first thing I will do is apologize to Britta. She will have been worried. I will certainly expect an apology from her as well.

My parents trail me as I lock the car and walk up the staircase towards the second-floor loft. All is quiet as I open the door, the jangling of my keys the only sound in the building. Easing open the door, I peer into the loft, expecting to find Britta lounging on the couch or in the kitchen, cooking. She isn’t in either place.

“Hallo?” I call. “Britta? I’m home!”

When there is no response, I assume she has gone out to lunch, or perhaps for groceries. She will be home soon enough. My apologies can wait. I show my parents to the second bedroom and head towards the master bedroom, planning on a shower.

Upon entering, my attention is drawn to a white paper on the made bed. I lift it curiously, watching as a ice blue ribbon falls off of the card. I note that the fabric is remarkably similar to Britta’s eyes.

My eyes scan the page, although I don’t seem to comprehend anything on the first glance over. It is from Britta, I know that from my name scrawled at the top in her swirling handwriting. I try to read it again.

When I finally comprehend enough to make meaning of the letter, there is little I can do but sink to the floor and stare blankly at the wall. She’s done it.

Avgust Gavrilov -

You have not yet returned, and it is eight o’clock on 27 April. I hoped to tell you in person, but perhaps this method is best. I have decided to leave and terminate our marriage. It is something I should have done earlier, I know this. It may seem unfair to you now, with the current timing. Perhaps it is this event that has awakened me to the state of our marriage. In the interest of keeping you informed, I think it important to let you know that I have made a decision regarding our baby. After hearing several opinions on the effects of radiation on the unborn, I have chosen abortion and will have undergone the procedure by noon tomorrow. It is better than risking birth defects that may change my life forever. I understand that you may not be pleased with this decision, but understand it is not yours to make.

On the topic of divorce, a lawyer will be in contact soon.

Goodbye & Best interests to you,

Britta Dahl

The paper crumbles in my hand as I squeeze my palm into a tight ball.

Once again, I have no choice in my life. I did not choose to have Chornobyl blow its top. I did not choose for my coworkers and superiors to slowly die from exposure. I did not choose my profession to be so treacherous. I did not choose for my livelihood to go up in smoke and ashes.

I did not choose for my family to crumble, to disappear. It was her choice to make.

Works Cited

“Alps Still Contaminated by Radiation from Chernobyl.” *Medicine, Health, and Bioethics: Essential Primary Sources*. Ed. K. Lee Lerner and Brenda Wilmoth Lerner. Detroit: Gale, 2006. 343-346. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Web. 30 Jan. 2015. <http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX3456500131&v=2.1&u=lakeoswego&it=r&p=GPS&sw=w&asid=e61fe08f177f679422684ecf9633dace>.

“Chernobyl accident - Ukraine: 1986.” *When Technology Fails*. Ed. Neil Schlager. Gale Research, 2008. *Discover Collection*. Web. 3 Feb. 2015. <http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CTX2645800027&v=2.1&u=lake72770&it=r&p=GPS&sw=w&asid=1c21bd7775489dfcd090beeebaf0505c>.

“Chronology.” *Pripyat.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Feb. 2015. <http://pripyat.com/en/chronology.html>.

“Distance from Kiev.” *Google Maps*. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Feb. 2015. <https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Narodichi,+Zhytomyrs’ka+oblast,+Ukraine/Kyiv,+Kyiv+city,+Ukraine/@50.8740679,28.6218178,8z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m13!4m12!1m5!1m1!1s0x472a3104d9470135:0x50f8ba3877634196!2m2!1d29.0775!2d51.202778!1m5!1m1!1s0x40d4cf4ee15a4505:0x764931d2170146fe!2m2!1d30.5234!2d50.4501>.

“German Names of the 1980s.” *Baby Med*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Feb. 2015. <http://www.babymed.com/baby-names/top-german-baby-names-germany-1980s>.

Horner, Lisa. “Chernobyl: A Short Story of Human Impact.” *SRAS*: n. pag. *The School of Russian and Asian studies*. Web. 16 Feb. 2015. <http://www.sras.org/chernobyl\_short\_history\_human\_impact>.

LB, Knudson. “Legally Induced Abortions after Chernobyl.” *Biomed Pharmacother* (1991): n. pag. *Pub Med*. Web. 16 Feb. 2015. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=abortion+in+denmark+chernoby>.

“Name: Avgust.” *Behind the Name*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Feb. 2015. <http://www.behindthename.com/name/avgust>.

“Radiation Sickness: 8 Terrifying Symptoms.” *CBSNews*. CBS Interactive. Web. 9 Feb. 2015. <http://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/radiation-sickness-8-terrifying-symptoms/>.

Read, Piers Paul. *Ablaze: The Story of the Heroes and Victims of Chernobyl*. New York: Random House, 1993. Print.

“Temperature during 1986 in Kiev, Ukraine.” *Weatherspark.com*. Weatherspark Beta, n.d. Web. 16 Feb. 2015. <https://dbffkv15yp72v.cloudfront.net/production/reports/history/year/000/033/809/1986/temperature\_temperature\_f.png>.

“Ukraine”. Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.

Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2015. Web. 16 Feb. 2015

<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/612921/Ukraine/30087/Ukraine-under-Shcherbytsky>>.

Attribution of Research

1. “Alps Still Contaminated by Radiation from Chernobyl.” *Medicine, Health, and Bioethics: Essential Primary Sources*. Ed. K. Lee Lerner and Brenda Wilmoth Lerner. Detroit: Gale, 2006. 343-346. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Web. 30 Jan. 2015.

* The Chernobyl power plant exploded in late April (the 26th) of 1986
* Iodine tablets could be taken as a prevention against thyroid cancer

1. “Chernobyl accident - Ukraine: 1986.” *When Technology Fails*. Ed. Neil Schlager. Gale Research, 2008. *Discover Collection*. Web. 3 Feb. 2015.

* The workers were running an experiment at the time of the explosion
* Build-up of Hydrogen gas was the main reason a hole was blown in the reactor’s metal casing
* The workers decided to shut down the emergency cooling system so the experiment could be successful
* There was a severe lack of media coverage of the event

1. “Chronology.” *Pripyat.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Feb. 2015.

* The explosion occurred at 1:23 AM
* Evacuation occurred on April 27 (at 12:00)
* There was a second police sweep to ensure that all residents of the town evacuated at 6:00 PM

1. “Distance from Kiev.” *Google Maps*. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Feb. 2015.

* Ideal travel time from Kiev to Narodichi is 2 hours and 22 minutes
* The trip from Pripyat to Narodichi would take around 2 hours and 30 minutes

1. “German Names of the 1980s.” *Baby Med*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Feb. 2015.

* Britta and Svitlana were popular female German names in the 1980s

1. Horner, Lisa. “Chernobyl: A Short Story of Human Impact.” *SRAS*: n. pag. *The School of Russian and Asian studies*. Web. 16 Feb. 2015.

* Victims were taken to Kiev hospitals

1. LB, Knudson. “Legally Induced Abortions after Chernobyl.” *Biomed Pharmacother* (1991): n. pag. *Pub Med*. Web. 16 Feb. 2015.

* Widespread panic relating to birth defects among citizens indirectly caused an influx of abortion procedures based on word of mouth (This fact relates specifically to Denmark, but I assumed Ukraine experienced similar effects)

1. “Name: Avgust.” *Behind the Name*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Feb. 2015.

* Avgust is a common Ukrainian male name

1. “Radiation Sickness: 8 Terrifying Symptoms.” *CBSNews*. CBS Interactive. Web. 9 Feb. 2015.

* Symptom of Radiation Sickness: blistering skin
* Symptom: ulcers
* Symptom: bleeding out of mouth, gums, nose, eyes, and internally
* Symptom/effect: anemia

1. Read, Piers Paul. *Ablaze: The Story of the Heroes and Victims of Chernobyl*. New York: Random House, 1993. Print.

* certain Government officials had flats with greater dimensions than others, a violation of Socialist ideals
* It was very common for officials to have a network of friends with whom they would share homes, drivers, services etc.
* Nuclear power was a lucrative field in which officials could receive clandestine bonuses directly from the Government, resulting in many amenities and luxuries
* Chernobyl is “Chornobyl” in Ukrainian
* At the Chernobyl power plant, many workers hoped to ascend the ranks and become powerful in the Communist society
* Previous problems and crises at the plant were kept secretive, leading to widespread denial about the possibility of a meltdown
* There was no national announcement until April 28, 1986 at 9:00 PM
* Evacuees were sent to Narodichi by bus, among other towns
* The Soviet Government wanted to avoid a media disaster similar to that of the Three Mile incident in Pennsylvania
* The Boron control rods in Reactor 4 jammed and could not be inserted to slow down the rate of Nuclear fission
* ‘Peasants’ in Narodichi took in stranded Pripyat citizens
* There was a forest and various rivers/streams separating Pripyat and the power plant
* The distance spanned two kilometers
* It was common for Chernobyl workers to walk from Pripyat through the forest
* There is a first witness account of a Wedding party celebrating on the Pripyat riverbank the day of the explosion
* Many Pripyat women dressed in their best clothing before leaving (specifically furs)
* Radioactive Iodine is retained by the Thyroid, Ruthenium by the Intestine, Strontium and Plutonium by the bones, and Barium and Molyndenum by the lower Large Intestine
* Articles were published by journalists Kovalevskava and Dollezhal that questioned the design of the RBMK Reactors
* The response was negative to these articles and many considered them debunked after government officials spoke out against them

1. “Temperature during 1986 in Kiev, Ukraine.” *Weatherspark.com*. Weatherspark Beta, n.d. Web. 16 Feb. 2015.

* The weather averaged around 60 degrees Fahrenheit or 18 degrees Celsius throughout April

1. “Ukraine”. Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2015. Web. 16 Feb. 2015

* It was common practice to isolate and shun people who criticized anything about society (especially Nuclear power)
* The Ukrainian monetary system was the Hryvnia
* The Soviet Union prioritized nuclear power and its chosen design of reactors, although safety was questionable
* There was a rise in nationalism and xenophobia, causing many citizens to fear the United States and other countries